

September 28, 1999

*** RECEIVED ***
Nov 18, 1999 16:29:01 WS# 02
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE
CONTROL CENTER

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Over the past decade, industry and government scientists have radically altered the nature of our food and our **farms** using a new technology known as "genetic engineering." This allows the transfer of genes from one species to another and the creation of organisms that have never existed in nature before.

Today, over 30 different genetically engineered fruits and vegetables are on the market, **mostly** varieties of corn, soybeans, potatoes, tomatoes and squash. Most of these foods have been engineered to be herbicide resistant or to contain a bacterial toxin that makes them insect resistant. These crops grow on more than 50 million acres of U. S. farmland. An estimated 40 % of the soybean crop and 30 % of the corn crop are genetically engineered. Because soy and corn products are so widely used in processed foods, up to 70 % of the processed foods lining our supermarket shelves is estimated to contain genetically engineered components.

Scientists and health experts have warned that genetically engineered food could lead to increased **allergies** as new proteins from organisms never before eaten as food are introduced into human and animal food chains. Genetic engineering raises a totally new threat to the environment; "biological pollution." This is caused by living organisms that grow, disperse, reproduce and mutate. Such organisms do not respect field boundaries or national borders; once released, they cannot be "mopped up."

The unpredictable **impacts** of genetically engineered crops on our environment were highlighted earlier this year when it was found that insect-resist. ant corn genetically engineered with the toxin *Bacillus Thuringiensis* (**Bt**) can kill the Monarch butterfly caterpillars. Also, it has been found that Bt crops adversely affect beneficial predators like lacewings and ladybugs that eat insects that have fed on genetically engineered plants.

Despite the health and environmental hazards of genetic engineering, the federal government exerts little regulatory oversight over the booming biotechnology industry. Regulation of genetically engineered organisms falls under three federal agencies: the EPA, FDA AND USDA, all of which have given the green light to genetically engineered foods. The FDA requires neither pre-market testing nor labeling of these foods. Consequently, consumers have no way of knowing exactly what they are eating.

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The federal government has not only refused to adequately regulate the biotechnology industry, it actively promotes the industry, providing funding for research and development and threatening to use international trade rules to force unwanted genetically engineered produce on unwilling European consumers.

To help rectify the situation I ask that the following actions be taken:

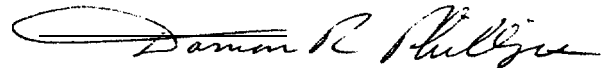
-that the FDA pre-market test and label all genetically engineered foods,

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-that **Bt** corn be banned to protect the Monarch butterfly, and

-that corporations be held liable for any health or environmental impacts resulting from their introducing genetically engineered foods.

Very respectfully yours,



Damon R. Phillips
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copy to:

Senator John W-Warner
Senator Charles S. Robb
Representative Thomas M. Davis